

D.A.R.E. classes pay off with self-defense lessons

A 12-year-old girl who took the class escapes an alleged attacker

By Marcus Franklin

West Carrollton D.A.R.E. police officer Gene Jarman on Thursday characterized the 12-year-old girl who fought off an alleged attacker Tuesday as a friendly, energetic student who asked lots of questions in his course last year.

Police say Jason Michael Shaner, 19, tried to pull the girl into his car Tuesday. She said she struggled free, kicked him in the groin and rode off on her bike to tell her parents.

Jarman said he was impressed with the girl's "assertiveness and her ability to recognize a dangerous situation and not be afraid to act."

The girl, her father and some law enforcement officials believe the D.A.R.E. course is, at least, partly responsible for her escape.

"I'd like to think that all of our D.A.R.E. students would do that," Jarman said. "She was an excellent D.A.R.E. student."

In recent years, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program has expanded to include instruction on how students can protect themselves in dangerous situations.

Every year in West Carrollton, officials conduct separate 17-week courses for fifth-graders and eighth-graders.

"The eighth-grade course is a follow-up," Jarman said. "We discuss a lot of the same stuff but we get a little bit deeper than we do with the 5th grade."

Workbooks help students learn the meaning of words such as assertiveness, violence and drug abuse.

"During the first week of class, we talk about their rights to be safe, to say no," the 15-year police veteran said. "They should never let anyone touch them if they feel uncomfortable. We don't want them to be passive and let people take advantage of them."

The students can drop questions anonymously in a box.

Queries range from what's it like to be in a police chase and "Have you ever shot anyone?" to advice on what to do about alcoholic or tobacco-addicted parents. "You never know what you're gonna get," he said.

Darren Nunn, 14, said he took a DARE course as a fourth-grader at Fairview Elementary School.

The course was enlightening for the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School freshman. "I thought I knew what to do in (dangerous) situations but I didn't."

Nunn said the course taught him how to resist peer pressure and how to stay away from drugs and strangers.

The course also teaches youngsters about gangs and how to avoid becoming involved with them.

To find out whether your child's school has a DARE Program contact the school.

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